

**CLAIMS**

What is claimed is:

- 5 1. A method for processing a return of an item purchased from a selling merchant by a remote customer, said method comprising:
- receiving an order for said item from said customer;
- 10 sending said item to said customer by said selling merchant;
- receiving a return communication from said customer requesting a return of said item to said selling merchant;
- 15 and
- sending a shipping communication to said customer, said shipping communication identifying a receiver other than said selling merchant to whom said item is to be returned.
- 20 2. The method as set forth in claim 1 and further including:
- receiving a return receipt notice from said receiver when said item has been received by said reseller.
- 25 3. The method as set forth in claim 2 wherein said method further includes:
- charging a designated customer account after receiving said
- 30 order.

4. The method as set forth in claim 3 and further including crediting said customer account after receiving said return receipt notice from said receiver.

5 5. The method as set forth in claim 4 and further including sending notice of said crediting to said customer.

6. The method as set forth in claim 1 and further including:

10 effecting an auction of said item following said receiving of said return communication from said customer, said receiver being a winner of said auction.

15 7. The method as set forth in claim 1 and further including maintaining a database for storing information concerning said customer, said item and said receiver, said database being updated upon receipt of an order, a return request or a return receipt notice.

20 8. The method as set forth in claim 1 wherein said receiving of said return request and said sending of said shipping communication are accomplished by email communication.

25 9. The method as set forth in claim 8 wherein said return receipt notice is accomplished by email.

10. The method as set forth in claim 9 wherein said notice of said crediting is accomplished by email.

30 11. A storage medium including machine readable coded indicia, said storage medium being selectively coupled through a reading device to processing circuitry within a

computing system, said reading device being selectively operable to read said machine readable coded indicia and provide program signals representative thereof, said program signals being effective to process a return by a selling  
5 merchant of an item purchased by a customer at a remote location, said program signals being selectively operable to accomplish the steps of:

receiving an order for said item from said customer;

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effecting a sending of said item to said customer by said selling merchant;

receiving a return communication from said customer

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requesting a return of said item to said selling merchant;  
and

sending a shipping communication to said customer, said shipping communication identifying a receiver other than  
20 said selling merchant to whom said item is to be returned.

12. The medium as set forth in claim 11 wherein said program signals are further operable for:

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effecting a receipt a return receipt notice from said receiver when said item has been received by said receiver.

13. The medium as set forth in claim 12 wherein said program signals are further operable for:

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effecting a charging a designated customer account after receiving said order.

14. The medium as set forth in claim 13 wherein said program signals are further operable for effecting a crediting of said customer account after receiving said return receipt  
5 notice from said receiver.

15. The medium as set forth in claim 14 wherein said program signals are further operable for effecting said sending of said notice of said crediting to said customer.

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16. The medium as set forth in claim 11 wherein said program signals are further operable for effecting an initiation of an auction of said item following said receiving of said return communication from said customer, said receiver being  
15 a winner of said auction.

17. The medium as set forth in claim 11 and further including maintaining a database for storing information concerning said customer, said item and said receiver, said  
20 program signals being further operable for updating said database upon receipt of an order, a return request or a return receipt notice.

18. The medium as set forth in claim 11 wherein said  
25 receiving of said return request and said sending of said shipping communication are accomplished by email communication.

19. The medium as set forth in claim 18 wherein said return  
30 receipt notice is accomplished by email.

20. The medium as set forth in claim 19 wherein said notice of said crediting is accomplished by email.

21. A processing system including a system bus, a processor,  
5 a memory system, and a network interface, all coupled to  
said system bus, said processing system being operable in  
response to an item return program being executed from said  
memory system for effecting a return of an item purchased  
from a selling merchant by a customer at a remote location  
10 through said network interface, said processing system being  
selectively operable to receive an order for said item from  
said customer over said network interface, and effecting a  
sending of said item to said customer by said selling  
merchant, said processing system being further operable for  
15 receiving a return communication from said customer  
requesting a return of said item to said selling merchant,  
and sending a shipping communication to said customer, said  
shipping communication identifying a receiver other than  
said selling merchant to whom said item is to be returned.

22. The system as set forth in claim 21 and further  
including:

receiving a return receipt notice from said receiver through  
25 said network interface when said item has been received by  
said receiver.

23. The system as set forth in claim 22 wherein said method  
further includes:

30 charging a designated customer account in said memory after  
receiving said order.

24. The system as set forth in claim 23 and further including crediting said customer account in said memory after receiving said return receipt notice from said

5 receiver.

25. The system as set forth in claim 24 wherein said system is further operable to effect a sending of a notice of said crediting to said customer through said network interface.

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